

The Oval

Volume 13
Issue 2 *Staff Issue*

Article 8

4-15-2020

Peaches

Alivia Zeiler

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/oval>

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Zeiler, Alivia (2020) "Peaches," *The Oval*: Vol. 13 : Iss. 2 , Article 8.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/oval/vol13/iss2/8>

This Prose is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Oval by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

PEACHES

Alivia Zeiler

My music drowned out the squeaking cart while I made my way to the produce aisle. My phone vibrated and I read a text from my phone: *I picked up another shift, don't wait up.* On my one day off this week- I was going to make a nice big dinner and make up our living room for a movie night- At least my grocery run just got cheaper. A flicker of movement in the corner of my eye made my breath freeze in my lungs. I leaned heavily on my cart, reminding myself there isn't anything there, and turned down the opposite aisle. Hallmark cards screamed at me with bright colors and swirling words: *Congratulation on the engagement! You're getting hitched! From now on you're never alone.*

"Never alone? In the first year that might have been true. In the first year you were both busy setting up a life together, planning, what was it: year one, get good jobs, year two get a big house, year three go on a real honeymoon, year four get a puppy, year 5 have a kid, a girl, hopefully. But it's year three now and your husband still works at a local supermarket while you work six days a week as an assistant to a secretary at a multistate law firm, you live in a shitty one-room apartment, and are no closer to that honeymoon in Switzerland. And as far as I can tell you've never felt more alone." Its voice came from behind me, I ignored it completely and instead focused on the way my right foot didn't quite fit the same in my shoe as my left, on the slight wobble of the cart, anything to grab and keep my attention.

Randy woke me up getting into bed at 4:28 A.M. He's been picking up extra shifts working 50 hour weeks just to pay for our honeymoon, so it's not surprising he's out within seconds. Sneaking out of bed I headed to the kitchen for a midnight snack and some water.

"Can we have that conversation now? You seemed to be focused at the store." A familiar voice echoed from behind me.

I ignored It and pulled out the eggs.

"Eggs?" It mocked, "for a pre-dawn snack? Are we really getting that lonely."

I heard the click of footsteps behind me as It moved, I resisted the urge to turn around. Instead, I focused on the movement of grabbing a

pan from the cupboard and twisting the knob on the oven.

"Trying this again, then?" It sighed, "I only come because you want me here."

"That's not true." I snapped before I could stop myself. I forced my focus back onto the cracking of the egg, the weight of it, the coarse texture, and how it crumbled so easily after the first crack.

"I thought we were gonna stop lying to ourselves about this?" The table squeaked as weight was added to it. It cleared Its throat and mocked my childhood voice, cracking and crying; "Why? Why does this happen! I wish I was someone people like. I just wish someone would actually be my friend."

The second egg cracked in my hand, "I was eight." I growled.

"Eight, fifteen, twenty-four, it's all the same to me."

I reminded myself not to engage, that's what Dr. Grile said. Instead, I reached for a spatula hanging from the wall and flipped my eggs.

I felt long bony fingers and thin palms on my shoulders, "If I'm here, might as well talk to me?" It rubbed my shoulders. I hated the comfort it brought.

I stared at the bubbling eggs and watched the smoke rise; I needed to flip them, but I was too apathetic to bring myself to do it.

"I don't even remember why we're fighting."

"You don't remember?" I hissed, ripping away, still refusing to look at it.

"Of course I remember. " It said, "I was trying to convey the idea of maybe moving forward someday."

I went back to my eggs; they had begun to give off the smell of charcoal. "I won't talk to you."

"Fine. Don't talk." It pouted, tapping the end of Its fingers on the counter.

I turned off the stove, turning away from It with the pan in hand.

It got bored and moved behind me, "Did you see this?"

The grey garbage-can opened with the pressure of my foot and I dumped the eggs.

"It's one of Randal's pay stubs." I heard the flap of paper, "don't you wanna take a look?"

"Randy." I corrected and put the pan down.

"He feels more like a Randal to me." It reached from behind me, placing the small slip into my hand.

"Why are you giving this to me?"

"I just think you might want to take a look. My guess is it's a little

small for how many hours—

“Stop!” I yelled, caught myself, then lowered my voice, “Just stop, go away.”

Soft footsteps enter the kitchen, “Abigale, I’m trying to sleep.” My husband mumbled from the doorway, “Can you please do whatever you’re doing quieter.”

I turned and smiled at him, “Yeah, of course, I’m sorry.”

He muttered to himself as he went back to bed. I set the slip back on the table and looked around the kitchen. It was gone.

I didn’t sleep the rest of that night leaving me exhausted for the next day. That led to completely forgetting to print ten copies of a twenty-page report for my boss until 25 minutes before the meeting. Which brought me to staring blankly at the bottom of the printer as it spat out each page with an annoying scrape and hum.

“Aren’t you tired of this?” An adjacent printer whined as It jumped on it. All I saw out of the corner of my eye was its legs hinge in the middle of its shin as it swung them like a child. “Tired of being at work doing meaningless things while your husband fucks someone else.”

“He’s not—” I stopped myself.

“He’s not at work, that’s for sure.” Its familiar laugh sounded like a pinecone bouncing down a tin roof.

“Why are you doing this!” I snapped up looking at where it had been a moment before.

Its voice came from behind me, soft and full of mock sympathy, “Abs, you have been abused your whole life. I want to make sure your sweet and innocent soul doesn’t get pushed around again.”

“You don’t care! Why do you keep pretending like you do?”

“I do care. I have always cared. Everything I have ever done was to help you get what you deserve, what you want.”

“I want you to go away! I want you to stop.” I spun around again. Its jerky movements and ash grey skin flickered in the corner of my eye as it moved behind me.

“I can’t do that. If I stop, you will fail. You will continue working this shitty job. Being pushed around- you’re late to the meeting by the way- and continue going home to a husband who doesn’t want to sleep in your bed.” The printer continued to hum and scrape hum and scrape hum and scrape.

“I don’t need you. I have never needed what you’ve done!” I ripped the papers out of the printer.

"No need to be unappreciative, I've done everything for you." I whipped around throwing the paper stack in my hand at It. It was out of eyesight by the time the paper hit the floor.

"I have done everything for me. You haven't done shit to help." I saw a coworker walk past the printer room door and give me a sideways glance before continuing.

I took a deep breath and closed my eyes, "You're not real. You couldn't have done anything."

"Fine. Let's say I'm not real. You know what that would mean for you?" I could hear the smirk smeared on its face, "It would mean that everything in your life was your doing. The good... and the bad."

I picked up the paper on the ground and grabbed whatever was done from the printer. Then headed out the door as It called after me, "You win! I'm not your friend, I'm your fall guy."

I went home early, I didn't care if it endangered my job. I tried to call Dr. Grile nine times, but she didn't answer, she was on vacation. I was just hoping she'd be back by now. I immediately sat on the couch and did my breathing exercises and tried to remind myself that It wasn't real. That It was something my subconscious did to deal with trauma and It did not control me. "I don't need to." It threw my medication bottle next to me. I had three pills left and I took them all. I knew it wasn't how they worked but maybe if I believed it enough. I then found myself pacing around the paystub on the table. If I looked I would be admitting I don't trust my own husband and if I didn't I would be allowing him to pull the bag over my head. I eventually decided to turn on the T.V. to drown out my thoughts.

He got home at some point, "I thought you worked until five?"

I stood up and gave him a hug, one he hesitated to return. "He smells like artificial sweaty peaches, you don't wear perfume, do you?" It spoke, Its voice echoing in my head.

"Did you get any new shampoos?" I asked him before pulling away.

He shook his head, "No, why?"

"No- no reason I just, also bought some and didn't want to double up." I walked slowly to the couch.

"Alright I'll remember when I go to the store next," he walked by me and thought I didn't see the guilty squint in his eyes. "I'm gonna take a shower."

I nodded my acknowledgement.

"Look at the pay stub. If I'm wrong I'll leave." It promised me.

I stayed still, staring at the carpet and chewed on a hangnail before I stood. I don't remember grabbing it. I don't remember opening it, but I know, I remember reading: **Hours:** 33.

The shower turned off. "That seems a bit under 50." I didn't move as Its leather sandpaper hands wrapped around mine, "What do you *want* me to do?"

He walked into the kitchen in his stupid basketball shorts not wearing a shirt, "when did he start manscaping?" Its neck creaked as it tilted its head.

"Put on a shirt." I snapped as I turned to face him.

"I'm sorry," He gave me a confused look like he didn't know what was going on, "what?"

I stepped up to him, "Put.On.A.Shirt."

He didn't end up needing to put on a shirt. It took off the skin, it was dirty and reeked of peaches and sex.